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AUTHOR Aghbar, Ali-Asghar
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ABSTRACT

The effectiveness of the "read-comp" technique in assessing writing ability and the usefulness of a rubric and procedure devised for scoring read-comp samples and essays were evaluated. Subjects were 100 freshman students enrolled in general and remedial English classes in a 6-week summer session at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. The test battery consisted of two writing tasks. The first was a 20-minute essay. The second, the read-comp procedure, required students to read a paragraph in 2 minutes and then prepare a paragraph on that information in 7 minutes. The rubric developed for the study, which took account of sentence level and discourse level characteristics, was called guided impressionistic scoring, and was designed to be less subjective than purely holistic scoring. Two scorers trained in the method examined all the essays and read-comp paragraphs. Inter-scorer reliability was 0.76 for the essay and 0.85 for the read-comp. There was a strong interrelationship between subscores assigned by each scorer for the read-comp. Both the inter-scorer reliability and the inter-scorer interrelationship among subscores suggested that the scoring of the read-comp was more successful than was the essay scoring. Validity studies suggested that each test evaluates areas not touched by the other; together they can provide a fuller profile of writing ability. The scoring rubric and test examples are appended. (SLD)

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Read-Comp as an Additional Measure of Writing Ability

Ali-Asghar Aghbar*

This paper is the report of a pilot study on assessing the writing ability[1] of postsecondary school students. As such, it has two major objectives: to study the effectiveness of read-comp as a measure of writing ability and to study the effectiveness of a rubric and procedure devised for scoring read-comp samples and essays.

There is a great need for accurate and feasible measures of writing ability not only for assessing student readiness and achievement, but also in research where the effectiveness of certain instructional treatments is to be measured. Such tests should enjoy three basic qualities namely, high validity, reliability, and practicality. This means they should provide an accurate assessment of how the test-takers actually write in the real world, yield consistent results, and be both cost-effective and easy to administer. Unfortunately, however, tests with all of these qualities do not exist. Some measures, such as the multiple-choice test, have high reliability but are

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* Ali-Asghar Aghbar is an associate professor at the English Department of Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

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low in validity. On the other hand, the essay test has high validity but often suffers from low reliability and practicality. Some researchers (e.g. Conlan, 1986, 125) have recommended combining essay tasks and a highly reliable test such as the multiple-choice test in an effort to exploit the advantages of both tests. However, the disadvantages of a multiple-choice test override its advantages. For one thing, it tends to measure what test-takers know about a language rather than what they do with it. In Krashen's (1982) terminology, it measures the test-takers' "learning" (i.e. conscious knowledge available to monitor performance when the conditions of time, focus on form, and knowledge of rules exist) rather than their "acquisition" (i.e. knowledge about a language which has been gained unconsciously through direct experience with the language in communicative situations and which is available to the speaker/writer when the focus is on communication).[2] Moreover, multiple-choice tests have a low face validly in that teachers of writing do not believe these tests measure what they hold to be involved in writing (Greenberg, Wiener, and Donovan, 1986, XIV).Finally, there are now doubts even about the cost effectiveness of these tests (White, 1986, 61).

Having ruled out the multiple-choice test, we still need to grapple with the low reliability of the essay, which varies with such factors as different topics, different wording of the same topic, different senses of audience, different test-taker incentives, different conditions under which the test is taken, different scorers, and different scoring conditions with the same

scorer.[3] In order to reduce the effect of the variables associated with the essay, many have called for the administration of more than one writing task. And Knite (1986, 67), having noted a low correlation between the scores on personal experience topics and on analytic topics, has recommended the use of two modes of discourse in important tests. However, if the two tasks are to be administered in one testing session, the students may not respond well to writing two essays consecutively; moreover, if they are to be administered in two sessions, there will be additional administration cost and burden. My research with the read-comp was an attempt at finding ways to alleviate these problems. The read-comp, which is, on the surface, different from the essay and takes only nine minutes to administer seems promising as an additional measure of writing ability.

DESIGN

Subjects

The subjects for this study were 100 freshman students enrolled in the English 100 and English 101 classes in a six-week summer session at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. Of this number, 65 were enrolled in English 100 and 35 were enrolled in English 101. English 101 is the first of three general education English courses while English 100 is a preparatory course designed for those who are not deemed proficient enough to register for English 101.[4] Almost all of the English 100

students were newly admitted students. The majority of the English 101 students were Summer/January students (i.e. newly admitted students who were to be matriculated in January). Most of the remaining English 101 students were previously admitted students who had either failed English 101 or were in English 100 during the previous semester.

The writing tasks in this experiment were administered during the second and third weeks of the summer course. This means that the students had already received some training in writing. Given that my purpose was to do a cross-sectional study of writing ability, the variations in the quality and quantity of writing skills acquired by the students should not play a significant rolein the results.

Writing Tasks

The test battery consisted of two writing tasks. For the first task, the students were asked to write on: "The Most Important Decision of My Life." They were given five minutes to think about the topic and twenty minutes to write.

Given what we now know about the writing process, allowing the students only twenty minutes to produce an essay hardly seems adequate. However, experience has shown me that, when the students are given more than twenty minutes, not all of them take advantage of the extra time. Some write fast and finish in fifteen minutes or less while many labor over words and phrases or over how to begin or end the writing assignment. Some take some time to revise and edit their work while others don't. Such

variations in the ways the students deal with the writing task have dire effects on test reliability. Thus, although twenty minutes is not ample time for writing an essay, it does have the advantage of putting all of the students on a similar footing.

I selected an experiential topic about which all students would have something to say.[5] As such, it encouraged a narrative rather than an argumentative mode of writing. Considering that my rubric for scoring this writing task directs the scorers to focus on general writing ability and not argumentation, it can be assumed that lack of argumentation did not affect assessments adversely.[6]

For the second task, I gave the students a paragraph with 122 words to read in two minutes. (See Appendix B for a copy of this paragraph.) Then I asked them to put it aside and write a good paragraph based on the information they had gained in seven minutes. I defined a good paragraph as one that was well developed, presented the information in a good order, and contained only related information.

This procedure, which is called read-comp, has been used as an instructional technique for a long time. I have found several advantages in using the read-comp as a test. In addition to its ease of administration, it acts as a direct, integrative measure of writing, which also gives it a high face validity. Moreover, it prevents "avoidance", to some extent, by forcing the students to try to express given thoughts and by encouraging them to use certain words and structures. Furthermore, for those students who cannot write because they feel they don't have anything to

say on a given topic, it provides thought contents. Finally, it resembles some of the writing tasks freshman students are usually expected to master in writing reports and research papers.

Read-comp may be criticized for requiring the students to demonstrate reading ability in order to write. Such a criticism seems valid.[7] However, the model paragraph used in the study is not beyond the reading ability of postsecondary students and contains concrete examples that assist remembering the general contents. In any case, all of the students were able to write a paragraph and the scorers were asked to evaluate this writing on its own merits regardless of whether or not it matched the contents of the original paragraph.

The same rubric was used in the scoring of both writing samples.

Administration

The test papers, which were placed in the right pocket of duotangs, consisted of a cover sheet, which also contained the topic, lined paper for the essay, the model paragraph, and lined answer sheet for rewriting the paragraph. The students were asked to take out only one thing at a time and keep their duotangs closed while they were working with it. They were told not to open their duotangs again until they were told to do so by the test administrator. When the time was up, they were told to put the paper they were working with in the left pocket and take one more thing out of the right pocket, and so on.

The first sheet was the cover sheet, on which the students were asked to write their names. This sheet contained a test number that had been copied on all the test papers. Thus, the students' identities were concealed from the scorers.

Each section of the test was printed on a different color paper, which further helped the administrator ensure the students did not have access to a test paper other than the one they were supposed to be working with.

The testing, which took less than 40 minutes, was done during the regular instructional period in different classes. The instructors were not present. I administered the test to all of the classes myself. The students had been alerted about the purpose of my visit by their instructors. In addition I told the students at the outset:

> Your professor has kindly allowed me to use some of his/her class time for my research. I am going to ask you to produce two writing samples for me. I am going to use the samples to validate my testing instruments. Therefore, the results will not affect you. Moreover, I guarantee to protect your anonymity. However, your instructor has asked me to give him/her a copy of your writing samples.[8] I truly appreciate your assistance.

Rubric and Guided Impressionistic Scoring

The numerical framework of my rubric was adopted from a rubric used by Virginia Pritchard (reported in Powell, 1980, p. 15). The reader is asked to examine Appendix A, which contains the rubric developed for this study and the instructions for its use. Although the rubric seems apt for primary-trait scoring or analytic scoring, it is not meant for either scoring method. In primary-trait scoring, writing samples are normally

judged on the degree to which they observe specified rhetorical features (White, 1985, 143 and Brossell, 1986, 180), but my rubric takes account of both sentence level and discourse level characteristics of writing. On the other hand, in analytic scoring, each feature of writing, such as style, syntax, wording, usuage, and spelling, receives a separate score. For example, in the rubric provided by Cooper (1977, 24), eleven separate evaluations are required of scorers. This makes the scoring process very cumbersome and time-consuming. Moreover, I have been told by scorers using analytic scoring that, by the time they get to the fourth or fifth item on the analytic rubric, they forget their impressions for these and later items. In contrast, my rubric, while containing many of the categories that may figure in an analytic rubric, requires the scorers to assign only two scores. This leads to increased speed in scoring and thereby probably to greater consistency in the results. I prefer to call the method of scoring used in this study guided impressionistic scoring. Here the scorer reads a writing sample quickly to form impressions and then looks at the rubric to translate the impressions into a score for structure, lexis, and mechanics and another score for rhetorical features.

Analytic rubrics have been criticized for making premature assumptions about what the separate subskills of writing are (White, 1985, 129). A similar criticism may be addressed to my rubric as it does break writing into a number of subskills although it does not force the scorer to consider each subskill in isolation. However, anyone who has done holistic scoring or

who has trained holistic scorers knows that every scorer meets the task with certain assumptions about what good writing is.[9] For example, Brossell (1986, 172) reports on studies where such variables as maturity of vocabulary and length figure prominently in the evaluation of writing samples. Rubrics like mine have the advantage of spelling out many assumptions that we all make in scoring writing samples. Training the scorers to base their evaluations on the rubric should result in more consistent judgments.

I have based the rubric on the basic belief that student writers not only vary in their command of rhetorical skills in such areas as organization, development, modes of discourse, style, coherence, and unity, but also in their command of grammar, lexis, and mechanics. If the rubric is to be used for evaluating readiness for freshman English classes, then I believe that the latter skills should be emphasized more in the evaluation since a high command in these areas is often assumed, whereas rhetorical skills are treated heavily in the syllabi.[10]

White (1986, 178) warns us to be wary of reliability reports of studies that use a scoring scale with a limited range of possible scores. He advises researchers to "trade the very high reliability they know they can achieve on such a compressed scale for the more refined distinctions that emerge from a scale that offers raters more decision points." The rubric used in my study does have a wide range of decision points. The possible scores for the two parts of the rubric add up to 25. And considering

that scores with decimals (e.g., 7.25) can also be chosen, the decision points available should satisfy White's call for a wider range--a range that can make it easy "to discern the fairly small differences among student writers that most research seeks to discover."

The range of possible scores in my rubric has a very high ceiling. I have done this deliberately to make it possible to account for exceptionally good writers.

In holistic scoring, the criteria are often not predetermined. Apparently, criteria are sometimes determined by experienced readers prior to the general scoring session (White, 1986, 70), and sometimes the readers are encouraged to hold discussions to "reach consensus on the criteria" (Sybil, 1985, 9). Such an approach may be appropriate for isolated testings. However, if we were to compare the performance of new freshman students from one year to the next or from one college to another, we would have no common grounds for the comparison as the criteria would be different for each testing. For this reason, I feel there is a need for an established, predetermined set of criteria that can be used at various testings. The rubric I have used, though still at a developmental stage, does seem to provide such criteria. Of course, if the scores are to be used for preregistration placement testing, the administrators might change the cut-off points for different eligibility levels from one testing to the next depending on such variables as the availability of preparatory classes and the variable proficiency level of the students from one year to the next. However, if the

criteria for judgment remain constant (and, of course, the tasks are equated for difficulty level), then comparisons between different student samples become possible.

The guided impressionistic scoring I have described should be less subjective than purely holistic scorings; nonetheless, it will always involve some degree of subjectivity. Therefore, I have had each writing sample scored by two scorers to offset this element (cf. Sybil, 1985, 9). The average of the two scores thus achieved is reported as the ultimate score. If there is a difference greater than 14 in the final percentile scores, then a third reader may be asked to score the corresponding writing samples and the average of all three scores is reported as the ultimate score. However, for the sake of the reliability assessments in this study, the samples were scored by only two scorers.

The scoring procedure used in this study can be used for placement testing, for research where a pre- and post-assessment of the subjects' writing ability is required, and for achievement testing. If it is used for achievement testing at college level, then one might switch the weighting for the two parts on the rubric to make it possible to provide a more valid account of instruction effectiveness since the mastery of rhetorical skills is included in the objectives of most freshman English curriculi.

Scorers, Scorer Training, and Scoring

The scorers in this study were graduate students in the Rhetoric and Linguistics Program at the English Department of

Indiana University of Pennsylvania during the summer of 1986. Three of the scorers were experienced teachers of English and one was a newcomer to the field.

As mentioned earlier, each essay and read-comp writing sample was scored by two different scorers. Also, the scorers for one kind of writing sample were different from those scoring the other.

The scorers were trained one at a time. Each training session lasted approximately 30 minutes, during which five writing samples (either essay or read-comp) were scored. (See Appendices C and D for the samples used in the training sessions.) After scoring each paper, the scorer and I discussed why or why not his or her scores were representative of the skill level manifested in the writing sample.

Although most of the scorers were extremely busy, they did the scoring as a favor to me and did not receive any remuneration for their work. In turn, I felt limited in what I could ask them to do. For example, I let the scorers take the writing samples home to score although I would have liked them to do the scoring under controlled conditions. However, it should be interesting to note how the scorers for the two groups varied in interscorer reliability despite their different scoring conditions.

White (1985, p. 25-26) discusses six procedures which he feels are necessary to ensure high reliability of scoring. They are:

1. Controlled essay reading (i.e., scoring by all at the same time and place).

2. Providing criteria guide (sometimes called a "rubric").
3. Sample papers (sometimes called "anchor papers").
4. Checks on the reading in progress to maintain consistency.
5. Multiple independent scoring.
6. Evaluation and record keeping.

In my study, procedures 2, 3, 5, and 6 were observed. Procedures 1 and 4 were not observed. In addition, my prescoring training sessions were very brief.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In this section, I will discuss interscorer reliability and related matters and some findings which pertain to test validity.

Interscorer Reliability

The statistical procedures for this study were mostly done with SPSS on a main-frame computer. Using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Formula, I correlated the two sets of final scores for each writing task. To determine interscorer reliability, I adjusted the correlations for two scorers using the Spearman-Brown Prophecy Formula using a calculator. Table 1 presents correlation coefficients, degrees of significance, and reliability coefficients.

	No. of subjects	No. of Scorers	Corr. Coef.	Prob.	Rel. Coef.
For the essay	100	2	.6145	.000	.76
For the read-comp	100	2	.7402	.000	.85

Table 1: Interscorer Reliability Reports for the Entire Sample

The interscorer reliability was found to be .76 for the essay and .85 for the read-comp. Considering that the scoring took place under less than desirable conditions, these results strike me as being significant. One can assume that interscorer reliability will increase with implementing a more extensive training session, interim checking of interscorer reliability and feedback to scorers, and generally more controlled scoring conditions.

There were 17 cases where there was a difference greater than 14 (comparable to one point on a scale of 1 to 6) between the percentile scores assigned to the essays. There were only 9 such cases between the scores assigned to the read-comps. Of these differences, 86 per cent were between 16 and 22 and there were no differences greater than 28 (comparable to two points on a scale of 1 to 6).

To find the interrelationship between Part I and Part II of the scores assigned by each scorer, I correlated the subscores. Table 2 presents the results.

	No. of Subjects	Coefficient	Probability
Subscores assigned by the first scorer of the essays	100	.7692	.000
Subscores assigned by the second scorer of the essays	100	.8680	.000
Subscores assigned by the first scorer of the read-comps	100	.5229	.000
Subscores assigned by the second scorer of the read-comps	100	.6564	.000

Table 2: Interrelationship of Subscores Assigned by Each Scorer

These results indicate a strong interrelationship between subscores assigned by each scorer. The interrelationship is particularly high for the subscores assigned to the essays. One might assume that the skills judged by the two subscores are closely related. This is probably partially true. It is also very likely that the scorers were influenced by their judgments about Part I when they assigned the subscore for Part II. This will have to be considered in future trainings. One way to counter this cross-influencing might be to ask the scorers to assign the subscore for Part II before the subscore for Part I in addition to warning them against being influenced by their judgments about the skills in one part when judging those in the other part.[11]

In general, the above reports of the interscorer reliability and interrelationship between subscores indicate that the scoring of the read-comp samples was more successful than the scoring of the essay samples. I do not believe that the scorers of the

read-comp samples were particularly more competent scorers than those who scored the essay samples; therefore, I am inclined to think that perhaps the read-comp is a more reliable measure than the essay task in this study.

Test Validity

I correlated the average of the two final scores given to the essay samples with the average of the two final scores given to the read-comp samples. The result was .5966 (P= .000).[12] This relatively high correlation indicates that the two tests share a rather high degree of variance. And, since the essay is a more direct measure of writing ability, this result seems to indicate that the read-comp enjoys a good amount of validity as a measure of writing ability. However, the above correlation coefficient indicates that there is also a great deal of variance (64%, to be exact) that is not shared by the two tests. This is to be expected as the read-comp introduces variables not present in the traditional essay. (See the discussion on the read-comp under Writing Tasks above.) It seems that, while the two tests have a great deal in common, each also taps certain aspects of writing ability not elicited by the other; therefore, the two tests combined can provide a fuller profile of writing ability.

This last conclusion was born out by a small experiment I conducted with an instructor who was teaching one of the English 100 sections and one of the English 101 sections. I had ranked

the students in each of her classes in four different ways as follows:

1. at random
2. according to essay scores only
3. according to read-comp scores only
4. according to the combined scores of the essay and the read-comp

I asked the instructor to tell me how well each list ranked her students. In both cases, she discounted the random list outright. And, in both cases, she chose the list based on the combined scores of the essay and the read-comp as the best ranking of her students. The second best list was the one based on the read-comp scores for English 101 and the one based on composition for English 100.

Given that the read-comp is an easy test to prepare, to administer and to score, that it seems to yield relatively high validity and reliability, and that it seems to elicit writing traits that are not normally represented in free writing tasks, I believe it is well worth serious considering as a supplementary measure of writing ability.

NOTES

[1]I have opted the term "ability" over other terms such as "proficiency", "skills", and "competency" because it seems to be somewhat neutral to such controversies as those rooted in the distinction between "competence" and "performance."

[2]Krashen's distinction between "learning" and "acquistion" is based on second-language acquistion studies. However, I strongly believe it has similar applications for performance in the mother tongue (cf. Hartwell, 1985) although one might argue that both formal learning and a feel for correct usage can be used to monitor performance in editing and other situations where the monitoring conditions exit.

[3]See Brossell (1986) and White (1986) for discussions of some of these variables.

[4]Preregistration placement decisions had been made based on the students' performance on two writing tasks, which had been scored by trained readers on a scale of 1 to 4.

[5]Two of the scorers of this task voluntarily commented that they were surprised to see all students writing freely about their personal experiences.

[6]The experiental topic I assigned encouraged a narrative approach to writing, which is by far more accessible to the students than an argumentative topic (cf. Brossell, 1986, 172). However, Hake (1986, 154) has found that "narrations are more likely to be misgraded than expositions that incorporate narrations". Nonetheless, Hake's findings, which are based on a very small number of subjects, are tentative and need to be confirmed with larger groups. Moreover, her "observation framework" encourages scorers to look for such things as the development of the central idea, paragraph boundries, topic sentence and its development in individual paragraphs, and transitions among paragraphs. These rhetorical features are more applicable to exposition than to narration.

[7]A similar criticism has been made about the multiple-choice test, which requires both reading speed and comprehension. Misreading the instructions for the essay can also result in undesirable performance.

[8]The instructors told one that they were asking for a copy of the samples to make sure that the students took the tasks seriously. One instructor reported to me that some students did not know why I was having them write for me and that some had not taken the writing tasks seriously.

[9]One of my hardest tasks in training experienced teachers for scoring is to get them to focus on the rubric and disregard their own strong feelings about what good writing should be. For example, I have had to deal with scorers who have given very low scores in the training sessions to otherwise fairly good writing samples that do not stick to the topic, use the word I frequently, repeat the same word, have poor parallelism, or express routine thoughts.

[10]If the goal of the evaluation is to measure readiness for graduate coursework, then we can switch the contents of the two parts while maintaining the numerical weight for the parts. Thus, rhetorical skills will be assigned a score of 1 to 15 and structure, lexis and mechanics will receive a score of 1 to 10.

[11]Here we have one further argument against analytic scoring: the cross-influencing probably increases much further when the scorers are asked to judge several subskills separately.

[12]Note that no use was made of third scorers in the experiment. I believe the interrelationship of the two tests would turn out to be higher if a third reader's scores are substituted for outliers.

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Appendix A:

Guide to scoring writing samples
Developed by Ali A. Aghbar

I. Assign a maximum of 15 points and a minimum of 1 point for structure, lexis, and mechanics
II. Assign a maximum of 10 points and a minimum of 1 point for rhetorical structure
III. Add these two scores and multiply the total by 4 to determine a percentile score

Part I. Structure, diction, and mechanics

Subscore	Structure	Lexis	Spelling/punctuation
15	—Polished, sophisticated —Great syntactic variety —Seems professional	—Sophisticated —Very good precision —Elegant choice of words	—Impeccable
12	—Moderately complex —Some syntactic variety —No errors	—Moderately sophisticated —Good precision —Good choice of words	—Almost no errors
9	—Somewhat simplistic & bland —Some steet talk —A few minor errors	—Mostly unsophisticated —Some precision —Fairly good choice of words	—Several minor errors
6	—Very simplistic —Nearly all like street-talk —Several errors (some serious)	—Totally unsophisticated —Sometimes vague —Some errors in choice of words	—Many problems, which often interfere with communication
3	—Very simplistic and often short and choppy sentences —Rampant errors	—Extremely limited —Vague —Many errors in choice of words	—Very poor spelling —Little sense of punctuation

Part II. Rhetorical structure

Subscore	Development/organization	Communicativeness	Coherence/unity
10	—Full development —Excellent organization	—Ideas are very clear —Totally captures the interest of the reader	—Flows like a spring of fresh water —Perfect unity
8	—Gives the reader a sense of completeness although lacks full development —Good organization	—Ideas are clear and interesting —Easy to follow	—Shows good coherence and unity
6	—Lacks full development and does not give the reader a sense of completeness —Some organization	—Ideas are occasionally obscure —Evokes some interest in the reader	—Some coherence and unity
4	—Underdeveloped —Poor organization	—Ideas are often obscure —Evokes little interest in the reader	—Poor coherence and unity
2	—Severely underdeveloped —Almost no sense of organization	—Difficult to understand —Evokes almost no interest in the reader	—Almost no conerence and unity

Notes

1. The above subscores do not exhaust all the possibilities. You may even assign subscores, such as 7.25.
2. Read a few of the compositions to develop a feel for the kinds of skill levels you are dealing with before you start assigning scores.
3. The first column in each part carries more weight than the second and third columns and the second column carries more weight than the third column.
4. When assigning scores, match your impressions with the interpretations given above. In Part I, first match your impressions with the appropriate interpretation for structure. Then increase or decrease the subscore depending on whether the writer fares better or worse in the other columns. In Part II, begin with Development/Organization and follow a similar procedure. (Again, please note that you may begin and end with subscores other than the above subscores.)

Appendix B: Model Paragraph for Read-Comp

Please read the following paragraph as many times as you can in two minutes. Then put it aside and write down what you remember in one paragraph.

> You read about them in the papers. People who, through a seemingly miraculous act of will, drag themselves up out of crippling accidents, life-threatening illnesses, or even birth defects. Somehow they overcome it all, emerging whole in body and victorious in spirit. A long-shoreman, crushed by 200 sacks of grain, fights his way back from paralysis to teach physical theraphy. A skydiver, terribly injured when his parachute fails to open at 2,000 feet, later competes in the Boston Marathon. A girl, born with a degenerating hip socket, becomes a dancer instead of a cripple. The power that transformed them seems to border on the miraculous. But isn't it possible that these "miracles" are just unusually dramatic demonstrations of abilities we all share?

From: Communication and Culture by Joan Young Gregg (Wadsworth, 1985), p. 121.

Appendix C: Read-comp Samples Used in the Training Sessions

Write a good paragraph using the information from the paragraph which you just read. (A good paragraph is one that is well-developed, presents the information in a good order, and contains only related information).

Student Test Number 17

Some people who have had strong mind control go out and do things if they go out and set their mind to it. They don't let their disalibities get in their way on the road to success. One person who was seriously hurt in a skydiving acident later run the Boston Marathon. He set his mind that he was coming back and do what he couldn't do if he didn't set his mind to.

Student Test Number 19

You read about it in papers? People with birth defects, cripples etc. They look over their situation and move on in their life to become somebody. A girl born with a degenerating hip socket became a dancer instead of a cripple. A man fell out of a parachute but moves on to participate in the Boston marathon. Such stories as these happen every day and everyone has the ability to do this. We all share the same capabilities.

Student Test Number 24

Miracles are remarable things that happen when all hope is lost on even achieving your goal. An example of some miracles are a woman with a defected hip socket became a dancer, another example would be a parachutest fell 2000 feet with out his parachut opening and was able to become a physical therapist.

Student Test Number 125

The miraculous recoveries people make happen are amazing people that have had illnesses, born with birth defects, or crippling accidents have the strength to recover. A long shoreman has 200 pounds of grain dropped on him, and he recovered to be a teacher of physical theraphy. A parachuter dropped 2,000 ft. and recovered. A girl with a hip problem becomes a dancer instead of a cripple. All these people had the strength that we all possess, but sometimes we do not show it.

Student Test Number 131

You read about it in the papers. Through what some call "a miracle" people have overcome such things as birth defects, severe illness's and accidents. It's amazing to read how certain individuals have willed themselves to become something once again. For example, a young girl born with a degenerate hip bone is now a dancer, and a skydiver whose parachute failed to open at 2,000 ft. has miracueously entered in the Boston Marathon. Can we all

assume that is one or two can find the strength inside to improve their lives, that each individual has the same power?

The most representative scores:

Student Test Number	Part I	Part II	Total Percentile Score
17	7	5	48
19	9	6	62
24	6	4	40
125	8	7	60
131	11	7.5	74

Appendix D: Essay Samples Used in the Training Sessions

Student Test Number 17

"The Most Important Decision of My Life"

The most important decision of my life was to decide wether to go out and find a job or go to school. If I would of stayed home I would have to go out everyday looking for work. That would of been constant trouble with filling out papers, going here going there, interviews and all the other garbage you would have to put up with. And that isn't for me.

I think I made a good decision upon going to school. That decision shows me that I have a good hold on my life. But that decision was partly based upon my friends decisions to go to school. I didn't want to stay home and do nothing with my life. I wanted to do something with my life that's why I'm here. I am glad I have friends like I have. They'll do things for me and I'll do things for them. That's how it should be. Now I must reach my goals I have set for college and for life.

Student Test Number 19

"The Most Important Decision of My Life:

The choice of whether to go to college or not was the most important decision in my life thus far. Since I have the rest of my life to live I had to decide whether I wanted a good career or some job I didn't even enjoy.

I made my mind up to go to college probably about the end of my freshman year in high school. It wasn't a long or hard decision. I knew what I wanted to be and I was going to do all that I could to reach this long term goal. My mind was made up to go to college for four years majoring in Medical Technology. Since I loved all my science courses in high school I knew this was the field for me.

Presently I am just starting my most important decision. I have already taken the first and second steps. Applied to a college got accepted and now in classes. So far I am pleased with myself for making the choice I did.

This decision I have made for myself was not made alone but with support and help from my parents. I made the decision and they approved of it. I'm sure they would lead me in the right direction because they have gone through similar experiences.

There are many important decisions in one's life but deciding to go to college is the most important to me so far in my eighteen years of life.

Student Test Number 24

"The Important Decision"

The essay I'm about to write is on the most important decision I made in my life. In the next few paragraphs I would like to explain how not setting your priorities in order can have a bad effect on a person. In my case I almost did not receive my high school diploma.

I am in my senior year of high school, my friends and I are really excited, this being our last year of school. Everyday was a different day, more exciting than the previous. You probably think school, exciting, the group of people that I use to hang around with. We always found things to keep our selves amused. An example would be one afternoon in lunch we would go around talking to the guys, or starting a food fight. We always found parties to go to instead of staying at home and doing homework.

I started noticing, along with my teachers that my grades were slipping, but I didn't worry about it because I thought that I would have enough time to bring them up. It was getting close to the end.

Student Test Number 125

One of the most important decisions I had to make envolved my major. I was considering two majors at the time. I was deciding between physical therapy and business. Although those two majors are unrelated, I had difficulty in choosing.

I first decided on physical therapy. I wanted to be within a hospital, but without the jobs of a nurse. I enjoy almost all sports, and have experienced sports related injuries. Helping someone on the way to recovery gave me a good feeling inside. I volunteered at a hospital in my home town for two summers. It was an educational experience. I read into the field for about a year and a half. The only thing that discouraged me was the fact of it being hard to get into. The field was not promising.

I felt that I needed something that would be a sure thing I was interested in business, and I think I have a business mind. I can not say it was a waist to learn about physical therapy. It was a great experience. I think I will do better in the business field. I will always think it is a pleasure to meet a physical therapist. I always had a high opinion of them. To know they have made it through the education of physical therapy gives me a good feeling.

Student Test Number 131

For me, the most important decision in my life was accepting the ignorance and lack of concern from my father. From this decision I am now capable of continuing my life without a depressing thought about me. Oddly, through his unfortunate personality, I've gained greater incentive to achieve success.

There are moments when I might be striving for all the wrong reasons, such as revenge; but time heals itself and hopefully me as well. There are other important choices I've made, such as attending college, which will benefit me in years to come, and deciding on a major that is to my liking. Of course, I could very well change over to another field of study but for now criminology interests me the most.

It may be hard for others to understand why I feel accepting my father was the most important decision, but until I did so, I was too confused with various other things to be concerned with my future plans. At this point in my life, that is the most important thing - my future.

I realized that it's so wasteful to dwell on problems you can't solve or change, for that only takes effort one can be giving towards their benefits. I'm thankful I've overcome a dilemma that could have kept me from making furthur decisions concerning my life.

The most representative scores:

Student Test Numbers	Part I	Part II	Total Percentile Score
17	7.5	5.5	52
19	9	7	64
24	7	5	48
125	9	6.5	62
131	11	8	76